

Bury Labor!

Vote Socialist!

Albanese's tenure in The Lodge has been one of open attacks on the working class. Presiding over deteriorating living conditions, the Labor government has pushed forwards with AUKUS, cracked the skulls of Palestinian protesters and put the CFMEU into administration—one of the biggest attacks on the workers movement in generations. Albanese has spent his entire term batting for the bosses and being a most craven lackey of US imperialism. As for Dutton, he is campaigning for more of the same *and then some!*

If either have their way, this would only be the beginning. With Trump twisting the arms of American allies to shoulder ever more, Australia will need to pay increasing amounts to keep the Empire afloat and begin severing its lucrative economic lifeline with China, for which the ruling class will try and make the working class foot the bill. Already there are cries by various bourgeois pundits to “Trump proof” the economy by further cracking down on the unions while lining up the country behind the US drive for war against China. Beneath the pantomime of promises in this election, it's an Albanese-Dutton unity ticket. Whoever becomes prime minister, both promise only more misery for the working and oppressed people of Australia.

To fight this course, the workers movement in this election must say: **no vote for Labor!** Yes, we need to struggle against the Coalition. But the fight against the coming attacks can only be waged independently of, and against, Albanese's ALP, which will only turn the screws tighter and has already drawn the just ire of swathes of the working class. This anger needs to be channelled into building a working-class opposition to the incoming government. To advance this, we call on workers and the oppressed to support Socialist Alliance (SA) and Victorian Socialists (VS) in the upcoming elections as both are standing against the major parties on a pro-working-class basis.

While we have political differences with both groups, the stronger the success of these socialist campaigns against Albanese, the better position the class will be in to organise as a real force and fight back against whichever party fronts for the bosses in the coming period. A strong socialist vote would be both a kick in the teeth to the political establishment and pose a working-class alternative to it. This would be the best way to nip the

budding right-wing reaction, which is already ascendant internationally. Workers are sick and tired of the rotten status quo. Either this discontent will strengthen the workers movement or it will become a

Unfortunately, working-class opposition to the ALP in this election, much like the workers movement as a whole, is weak and divided. The starkest example of this are the “left” union leaders. After allowing

streets, but through the ballot box. Even then, if unions had responded to Labor's union-busting by forging a (genuinely) *labour* alternative in the coming elections, this would have changed the terrain drastically. It could have been the basis for a larger, united working-class opposition to the ALP, able to harness the widespread discontent and demonstrate that the workers movement can be a force to be reckoned with.

Instead, these union bureaucrats spent months backpedalling. First there were murmurs of forging a new working-class party. Then there were whispers about backing minor parties of various liberal stripes. After months of dangling one thing in front of another, these bureaucrats whimpered their support to the union-busting ALP lest the Coalition gets in and...busts unions. The left, who had been riding high on the bureaucrats' “Bury Labor” train, were derailed as the energy seen months ago dissipated.

The worst are those leftists who champion “lesser evilism” and call to vote Labor and/or the Greens. This is an election where layers of the proletariat, repelled by Labor's attacks, are looking for a working-class alternative. Instead of fighting for this alternative, many on the left are doing the union bureaucrats' job of dragging the working class kicking and screaming back to the Labor government that has just betrayed them, or to the Greens which misdirects this working-class anger back into the hands of the (small-l) liberals. These “socialists” have given up even trying to put up a working-class alternative this election and keep the left discredited



reservoir of support for one of the many pretenders to the wannabe-Trump throne. If the workers movement continues to be a non-factor, the latter will become increasingly likely.

the CFMEU to be put under state administration without a shot being fired, union “leaders” from the CFMEU to the ETU proclaimed their commitment to “Bury Labor”—not by fighting back on the

What about the Greens?

Fed up with the two-party duopoly—and with Labor's attacks on workers and the oppressed—many see in the Greens a real alternative. Moreso than their European namesakes, the Australian Greens adopt the populist posture of a progressive, social-democratic challenge to the neoliberal consensus of Labor and the Coalition. They call to “tax the billionaires” and invest in public housing, oppose AUKUS and call for defence of Palestinians. On occasion they'll even denounce union-busting attacks on the workers movement, such as those against the CFMEU.

But behind all this posturing is a fundamentally liberal middle-class outfit, with a political strategy doomed to collapse. The Greens are no vehicle for the advancement of working-class and anti-militarist politics, let alone a socialist and anti-imperialist one. While layers of (especially young) left-wing workers back them, their political and ideological basis is rooted in the “progressive-minded” layers of the inner-city petty bourgeoisie. Committed to upholding the capitalist system but with some tweaks, it's no surprise then that the

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as little more than the hangers-on of the liberal order that is fast rotting away.

Then there are SA and VS, who are running against Labor. This is a good first step, which is why we are supporting them. But it is clear that even these groups are not approaching the elections with a real battle plan against the bosses in the coming period.

SA say they “want to put forward a radical alternative to the major parties” and run a socialist election campaign in defence of the CFMEU, Palestine and against AUKUS. Good! But their whole MO has been to play nice and be chummy with Greenies and “left” union bureaucrats. This is written all over their “eco-socialist” themed campaign, designed to only be a shade redder than the Greens.

For instance, the preference policy which SA campaigns on argues to “Vote [1] for Socialist candidates then preference Greens and other progressive candidate before preferences to Labor ahead of Liberals, Nationals and other right-wing

parties. This will maximise your vote and help keep Peter Dutton and his fellow Trump admirers out.” In past state elections they have gone so far as to even campaign for the Greens rather than run their own candidates. This is *poison* to a campaign that is supposed to be a working-class *alternative*.

It is one thing to abide by undemocratic voting laws which force you to preference several parties, however rotten, lest your ballot be declared spoilt. It is another to hide behind these laws to promise that votes “aren’t wasted” on socialists and will eventually go to these parties in a bid to “keep Dutton out.” Votes to SA aren’t wasted precisely *because* they stand in the way of Albanese and his union-busting crew. This is the only way to fight to keep out Dutton and co., against the Labor government which has long paved the way for them.

The VS campaign is cut from the same cloth. Their lead candidate, TikTok influencer purplepingers (Jordan van den

Lamb), has pledged to run a socialist campaign against the major parties with a laundry list of demands to be fought for not just in parliament but on the streets. But like their strategy on the streets, VS’s election strategy has been about seeking friends in the union bureaucracy and amongst other liberal elements. For example, in the seat of Calwell VS withdrew their candidate in order to not to stand against a Greens candidate. The result of this strategy is an election campaign whose demands come off as a long list of nice things to have, while dipping the tippiest of toes into more radical waters. Even the elementary call to defend the CFMEU, never a central axis in the campaign to begin with, has fallen off the radar the closer the election approaches. This is in spite of the demand offering real inroads into a large layer of disgruntled workers.

Both of these campaigns are undermined by the fact that they have been built not on the basis of advancing a class-struggle fight against the incoming government, but at best on trying to pick up a seat or two while remaining in the good graces of Labor’s union bureaucracy and the Greens. This disarms the working class’s ability to advance its interests or fight for any of these demands for that matter. Both election campaigns avoid rocking the liberal boat too hard and mounting a real challenge. While their strategy may have some sway among inner-city yuppies and would-be Teals, it alienates workers who are looking for an alternative to Labor and the Greens, not a Labor/Greens-lite.

In fact, while it is good that SA and VS are running against Labor, both campaigns reflect the very fatuous optimism and myopia imbibed by the major parties. This is seen in how their demands are bereft of any roadmap as to how to actually win them (beyond activist platitudes) let alone a plan to fight back against the coming attacks on the working class. Look around! The world is approaching crisis. The American Empire is demanding ever more from its allies in preparation for a war drive against China. To keep itself afloat, US imperialism will look to squeeze blood out of the working class from Guangzhou to Michigan. For this, Australia’s ruling class is gearing up behind Trump, which will mean further militarisation, a clampdown on the unions and much more. Whether it is Albo or Dutton, the next prime minister will soon enough be Trump’s little lackey.

There is a desperate need for the workers movement to wage an anti-imperialist fightback against this course. Doing so demands the most irreconcilable opposition to the “left” union leaders that have lined up behind Albanese. Waging an election campaign as a platform to advance a fight on this basis would project a real

alternative and put us in a position to harness the frustration of working people in Australia for their own class interests.

There are those on the left who recognise some of the issues that plague the left this election. In their article “Election 2025: What way for the working class?” (*Partisan!* No. 8), the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) rightly asserts the need to vote socialist in the coming election while directing valid criticisms at the left. They correctly point out how the socialist vote in the elections is weak and divided, that the “two platforms are nearly indistinguishable, and the sectarian differences that divide the movement are totally inscrutable to the working class” adding “Practically, these platforms are not necessarily more radical than that of the Greens —albeit one has the word ‘socialist’ plastered above it.”

All true! But the RCO solution boils down to preaching unity, declaring the necessity of a communist party, while rattling off their own list of demands to add to the platforms. Not wrong in itself, this still misses the central reason for the weak and divided nature of the left in these elections and more generally. The reason the socialist left is unable to cohere itself as a political force against Labor in the elections (or reforge a communist party for that matter) is precisely because it lacks a program for this. Instead of looking to break the workers movement from its misleaders, left groups hang off the coattails of the “left” Laborite bureaucrats who in turn bow down to Albanese. This is the basis for their Green-lite platforms, designed to be as agreeable as possible to the union bureaucracy. Instead of fighting for this break, the RCO tries to plaster over it with red paint.

So, what to do? Despite our differences, it is imperative to fight tooth and nail for the success of SA and VS in these elections. A strong working-class vote against the incoming government can only strengthen our position for future battles. But this cannot be separated from the struggle within the anti-Labor left for a strategy that can prepare the class for these fights, which threaten to become more acute in the coming period. Socialists should put forward a fighting program that advances this perspective. We propose:

- **Free Palestine!**
- **Defend the CFMEU!**
- **Smash the US-Australia alliance—Sink AUKUS, US troops/bases out of Australia!**
- **Reindustrialise Australia—expropriate the banks to pay for it!**
- **Forward to a workers republic! ■**

Greens...

(continued from page 1)

whole Greens strategy is to play the game of capitalist politics in hopes of finagling a deal with a minority Labor government.

We need to sink AUKUS, but we can’t do this without a program that challenges the fundamental interests of Australian capitalism. In spite of their grandstanding, the Greens uphold the US alliance, simply wanting to “renegotiate Australia’s position in the ANZUS treaty” on more favourable terms. As part of this, they want to build *more* missiles and drones at home as a “credible Plan B” to AUKUS. The dream of an “independent” militarised Australia, firing homegrown missiles as a more equitable partner to US imperialism, is a nationalist liberal fantasy. More importantly, it implicitly acquiesces to the role of junior partner to US imperialism which underpins Australian capitalist rule. The same goes for defending Palestine. As we wrote last year: “to really fight for Palestinian liberation means fighting to break the chain that ties Australia to the U.S. empire, an issue the Greens are not about to touch” (*Red Battler* No. 1, Autumn 2024).

The ultimate problem with the Greens is that liberal environmentalism, middle-class discomfort with poverty “in a rich country like Australia,” and pacifist anti-militarism is totally counterposed (and a hindrance) to rebuilding the working-class politics and organisation that is desperately demanded by the coming period of world crises. As economic instability and the drive to war increasingly put the squeeze on the whole of Australian society, escalating social tensions will only erode the social base for middle-class liberal progressivism and shatter its illusions.

Three decades of stability under US imperialist hegemony—and of global liberal triumphalism—provided ground for the Greens to step in as a non-socialist progressive third party. As this era quickly slips away, the politics of impotent Greenie liberal moralising, in spite of populist pretensions, can only engender greater reaction and hostility among working-class people—as it already does for many. The principal task today is the building of a credible and genuinely oppositional working-class alternative to Laborism and the bourgeois status quo. The path to this does not lead through the Greens. ■

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